

Infant Feeding...Birth Through 6 Months

Do you have questions about how to feed your baby? It might seem like a lot of people are willing to give you advice on infant feeding...but what advice should you take...and what should you ignore? This self-lesson will hopefully clear up some of the questions you might have and help you know what your baby needs to eat and when!

First Foods

The first “food” your baby will receive is breastmilk. Breastmilk is normal nutrition and is the normal way to feed babies. Breastmilk has the right amount of nutrients, it is ready when your baby needs it and it is neither too hot nor too cold. It also changes based on your baby’s needs. From birth to 6 months, breastmilk is all your baby needs. Breastfeeding should take place for at least the first year of life and longer if mom and baby decide that’s best!



Some moms are concerned because they cannot “see” what their baby is getting when baby breastfeeds and so they are not sure if baby is getting enough to eat. There are other ways to tell if your baby is eating enough for good health and growth. You’ll learn about that a little later.

If you are not breastfeeding, iron fortified infant formula is your baby’s “first” food and should be given for the first year of life. Because you are using a bottle to feed your baby, you can “see” what your baby is eating. Often, moms will pay too much attention to what goes into the bottle and how many ounces their babies eat instead of watching for their babies’ hunger and fullness cues. Whether you are breastfeeding or bottle feeding, it is important to feed your baby at the first sign of hunger. Stop feeding your baby at the first sign of fullness. Feeding this way will ensure baby learns to listen to her own hunger and fullness cues.

How will you know when to feed your baby? Your baby will show you when he wants to eat and when he is full. In the table below are the signs of hunger and fullness that require a prompt response from you.

Signs of hunger	Signs of fullness
-Hands go to the mouth	-Turning head away from food source
-Closed fists	-Closing the mouth
-Fussiness (Do not wait until your baby is crying to feed because this is the last sign of hunger).	-Content
	-Open, relaxed hands

What next?

If your baby is breastfed, she does not really need other foods (other than breastmilk) until about 6 months of age. If your baby is formula fed, your baby might be ready for cereal between 4-6 months. Each baby is different though and you should watch for signs that your baby is ready for solids. Infants never need solid foods before 4 months of age.

How do you know when your baby is ready for solid foods? Here are signs that show your baby is ready for solid foods:



- Your baby can sit up with some help.
- He can hold his head up.
- He has good head and neck control.
- She leans forward, showing an interest in food.
- She can lean back, showing she is done eating.
- Your baby can pull in his upper and lower lip as a spoon is taken from the mouth.
- She knows what to do with the spoon...she doesn't "thrust" her tongue out.



The first food that is usually offered at around 6 months is rice cereal. Rice cereal is not likely to upset your baby's tummy and it is a good source of iron. Rice cereal should only be given from the spoon.

Once your baby is 6 months old, he/she can start using a cup. The cup does not need to have a lid on it. Once cereal is started, small amounts of water can be offered in a cup. Small amounts of juice can be given too, but only from a cup. Never put juice in a bottle. This can make weaning difficult and lead to baby bottle tooth decay.

The chart on the next page will go over what you have learned today. Please feel free to ask your Nutritionist in the WIC clinic about any questions you might have.

Age	Foods	Is baby getting enough?
<p>Birth to 4 months</p> 	<p>Breastfeed: 10-12 times per 24 hours in the first month.</p> <p>Breastfeed 8-12 times per 24 hours in the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th month.</p> <p>If only formula feeding: your baby needs at least 18 ounces.</p>	<p><u>Breastfeeding:</u> Your baby should have 6-8 wet diapers each day and 4 or more loose, yellow, seedy bowel movements each day. <u>After 2 months</u>, your baby may stool less frequently.</p> <p><u>All infants:</u> Look at hunger/fullness cues in the first part of this lesson.</p> <p>Your baby should be gaining weight and growing in length. Keep your doctor appointments so your baby's weight and length can be checked.</p>
<p>4-6 months</p> 	<p>Breastfeed about 7-9 times per 24 hours.</p> <p>If only formula feeding: your baby needs at least 24 oz.</p> <p>Start with 1-2 tsp. rice cereal. You may increase it to 2 TBSP/day. Use a spoon. <u>Make sure your baby is showing the signs of readiness before giving solid foods.</u></p> <p>Juice can be offered at 6 months from a cup. No more than 4-6 ounces per day should be given.</p>	<p>*See above.</p>

Special Note: If your baby started infant cereal at 4 months, then he may be ready to try baby fruits and vegetables (from the jar or homemade) at 6 months. However, if your baby started infant cereal at 6 months of age, then she may not be ready for jar or homemade fruits and vegetables until 7 months of age.

Just as being active is important for your health, your baby needs to be active too. If your baby is sitting in her stroller, play pen, or car/infant seat for hours at a time, her ability to roll over, crawl, or walk might be delayed. It also might affect her brain growth. Some ideas to help your baby be active include playing peekaboo and pat-a-cake. You can hold your baby, rock her and carry her to new places too.

Here are 5 simple steps to help your baby be active:

1. Play with your baby, talk to your baby, and help him explore what is around him.
2. Your baby should be placed in safe settings where she can move her arms and legs freely. Her movement should not be restricted for a long time.
3. Your baby's activity should help him develop his movement skills.
4. Your baby should always be in a safe place, so when she walks or crawls she is not in danger.
5. Help your baby move! It is up to you as a parent to play with your baby and help her learn to move her body.



Thank you for reading this lesson today! Please answer the questions on the next page.

We hope you enjoyed this lesson on infant feeding!



Please answer the following questions. When you are done, give this sheet to your WIC teacher. If you have other questions about this lesson, ask your WIC teacher.
Thank you!

1. Please name
 - a. One way you can tell if your baby is hungry.
 - b. What is a sign your baby is full?
2. How can you tell if your baby is ready for cereal?
3. How long should you breastfeed your baby (or give iron-fortified infant formula)?
4. How can you help your baby be active?

References

1. "Let's Eat". Utah WIC Program. July 2004.
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3. Bright Futures in Practice: Nutrition (2nd ed.) (2002)
www.brightfutures.org/nutrition/resources.html
4. "Infant Daily Feeding Guide for Healthy Infants. A Year At a Glance-Birth to 12Months of Age". Utah WIC Program. February 2005.
5. NASPE Releases First Ever Physical Activity Guidelines For Infants and Toddlers. www.aahperd.org/naspe/template.cfm?template=toddlers.html.